

Barbara Koel and Jill McCauley (Verdon)

Daniel Schindler [00:00:07] So this is Virginia City Players Oral Histories Interview with Barb Koel.

Barb Koel [00:00:14] Q Yes.

Daniel Schindler [00:00:15] And Jill McCauley. And can I ask first to start off with just tell us a little bit about yourself. How did you end up in Virginia City? When were you a player here? And when I start with Jill.

Jill McCauley [00:00:29] Okay. I actually ended up here in 1988 and was a waitress where the candy stripper outfits that Sue Bovey wanted everyone to wear. And then I did that for three years, various jobs, waiting tables. I worked at the hotels. I moved around as a temp person, all kinds of different things. And then in 1994, I got cast in the Brewery Follies Show. So that's how I came to be in there. And Barb was in the Follies that first year and saved my bacon because I was terrified and had no experience.

Barb Koel [00:01:10] You were great. You were great. But I can see where you'd be intimidated because we threw a lot at you. I think there was like a fund raiser that was scheduled. Is that why you had to learn it so fast.

Jill McCauley [00:01:22] Yeah.

Barb Koel [00:01:22] So normally we have ten days or so to get the show up for a regular audience, but we needed a heater. I think that's why...

Jill McCauley [00:01:30] Oh, that's what it was.

Barb Koel [00:01:31] Into the brewery because early season, late season, it is so cold. And so we scheduled like two days into rehearsal this special performance that the locals could come to to raise money for our heater. But Jill, just coming in new, she was the only new one. That year. We were like, okay, you get to memorize all the group numbers.

Jill McCauley [00:01:51] Yeah, in a day and a half!

Barb Koel [00:01:51] Come up with a couple solos.

Barb Koel [00:01:54] And then you and I, let's do a duet. I mean, I don't know how you did it. I would have had a panic attack.

Jill McCauley [00:01:59] I did. (Laughter) Do you remember that too?

Daniel Schindler [00:02:03] I do. I remember, I remember the heater because everyone was just frozen. It was so cold at the beginning of the season.

Jill McCauley [00:02:07] Yeah, That was that was probably the most terrifying part of my life. And you guys got me through it.

Barb Koel [00:02:17] Yes!

Jill McCauley [00:02:18] I remember forgetting the words to one of my solos and sitting there and Rena Herman was in the front row. And I looked at her and I was just like. And Ken just kept playing, waiting for me to come back in. I look at Rena and she goes "You and do it." And I was like, okay. And I started again and got through it. So, yeah. But she's helped you so much. And. Mike Well, you all of you guys were great.

Barb Koel [00:02:46] And then you went on to several seasons; becoming a rock star in that theater, really. I mean, truly.

Jill McCauley [00:02:54] Thank you.

Barb Koel [00:02:55] So it's such a big contribution if we're talking about the history of the theater. You are a big part of it. And you should. You should feel proud not only in your performance years, but then you've gone on to manage it and really, I think, lead it into fame and success.

Jill McCauley [00:03:13] Well, Mike's the big one on that.

Barb Koel [00:03:14] But yeah, you were the one behind the scenes.

Jill McCauley [00:03:17] Behind the scenes.

Barb Koel [00:03:18] Making sure it was successful.

Jill McCauley [00:03:19] Yeah. So I did it for several years. And then I had I got a teaching job.

Barb Koel [00:03:26] A normal job.

Daniel Schindler [00:03:27] Was that what you were training in school anyway before you came here or.

Jill McCauley [00:03:32] What do you mean?

Daniel Schindler [00:03:33] This was a summer gig for you?

Jill McCauley [00:03:35] Yeah. And I was still. I was subbing. Okay. And then so that I could keep doing the Follies. I was substitute teaching so I could be done in mid-May or whenever we started. But when I got the real job, we didn't get out to it the first or second week of June, so I couldn't do it anymore. But I still did all the books and all that, all that good stuff. So yeah, yeah. Mike and I took over in '98 was when we bid to run it.

Daniel Schindler [00:04:04] And that was when Bovey had sold the majority of the town to the state.

Jill McCauley [00:04:10] Right, the state of Montana

Daniel Schindler [00:04:10] Oregon is getting privatized licenses.

Jill McCauley [00:04:12] Yeah. So you had to bid to become a concessionaire to run whatever business you wanted, so. Yeah. And the rest is history.

Barb Koel [00:04:22] Right. And I mean, that was the best decision that the state made was to hand it to you and Mike. And there's been no turnover as far as you guys running it. It's been fantastic. And I feel like the theater and everything that you guys take care of the hotel, the housing that you've lived in is like freakishly in pristine condition. The same pictures are on the wall. You know, it's just it's amazing to walk in there all these years later and it's like exactly the same.

Jill McCauley [00:04:56] Yeah, a time capsule.

Barb Koel [00:04:59] It is a time capsule! Because some people would be like, yeah, remodel will move the stage over here. Well, you know. Yeah. And but you have preserved it. And I think that's an important thing to do in a town like this.

Jill McCauley [00:05:11] Yeah. I mean, there's some changes in the Brewery. From where we used to come in is now like a stock room. But why did we have to move? I can't remember.

Daniel Schindler [00:05:22] Because the hops room was collapsing.

Jill McCauley [00:05:24] That's right. Yeah.

Daniel Schindler [00:05:26] The storage room was collapsing and they had to move it.

Jill McCauley [00:05:27] So they cut us off from there and then put the counter at the other end. And then we ended up going back to that other door and we take tickets and then have the bar separate because remember that probably drove you nuts when the bar was... and tickets all were all at the same counter top.

Barb Koel [00:05:44] It would create so much crowding from the customers and us trying to like get the drinks out and be like, Excuse me. Yeah, yeah.

Jill McCauley [00:05:56] Yeah. (Laughter)

Barb Koel [00:05:59] That's right. So, yeah, let me tell you a little bit about when I got involved in Virginia City. I remember coming here maybe as a teenager with my mom and visiting with my sister and seeing the ... probably the Opera House.

Daniel Schindler [00:06:14] Where did you grow up?

Barb Koel [00:06:15] I grew up in Billings, Montana. Yeah. And so I was in college there, and the gentleman that was running the Opera House at the time was running the Opera House and the Brewery Follies. He was doing both under Bovey Restorations. He didn't just hand me the job, though. We all had to go and do Montana's Summer Theater Auditions, which was great experience. And so, but he hired me on and cast in 1990, and I was 19 years old.

Daniel Schindler [00:06:49] That was Bill.

Barb Koel [00:06:50] Yeah, it was Bill Koch. And so I spent two years at the Opera House, and on my days off, a lot of times would go to the Follies show because they had that set up so that there was always a show going on. So if we had a day off, the Follies was the place to go for tourists. But I just was enchanted with the Follies. I loved the humor. I loved

the more contemporary aspect of it. And I was always thoroughly entertained by it. And so I think through that, Mike got to know me a little bit. I mean, we weren't... I didn't know him real well. But then during the winter of '92, it had to have been, he called and said, Are you interested in maybe coming and being a Follies person? And I was, you know. Yes, Yes. You know, don't ask me twice.

Jill McCauley [00:07:41] Well, he'd seen you perform and knew how talented you were, too.

Barb Koel [00:07:45] Well, maybe.

Jill McCauley [00:07:46] You were like the perfect fit for the Follies.

Barb Koel [00:07:47] Yeah. And I loved the little oleo skits we do down there. And so, yeah, he hired me, and I was there. 93 and 94. And we got together in 94 and became really good friends as well as co-workers. Yeah. And it's really kept up. I mean, there were a few years we lost touch, but I came back in 2008. I called Mike, I don't know, winter of 2008. And I just reached out and I said, you know, I would really like to come back to the Follies someday. It was some of the best summers of my life. Do you have any space or maybe I could help out in another way? You know, you need someone to just stock the cooler items. And he was like, Are you kidding me? Like, I mean, you were a Follie already, so. Yes, please. I do have a space, come back and. And I think I might have emailed him first, and then he just gave me a call.

Jill McCauley [00:08:47] I think you emailed me because you didn't have his contact stuff.

Barb Koel [00:08:50] Yeah! I emailed you. And then he just called me because that's how Mike is. He's like, forget this email. He's just like, Hello? Yes.

Jill McCauley [00:08:58] Yeah.

Barb Koel [00:08:59] Come on back, you silly goose. So then I was here from 2008 to 2012, so five summers. And in that time and the Follies had evolved a little bit. It was definitely more contemporary than it was before. And it could be edgier. I think just with the chronological time with media and TV and movies having evolved into being a little more riskque, or edgy. The Follies just followed suit.

Jill McCauley [00:09:30] Raunchy.

Jill McCauley [00:09:31] Yeah, a little more raunchy. And but also a little more original because, back in 93 and 94, we would do songs a lot of times that were already written, but we'd do our own spin character-wise on them.

Jill McCauley [00:09:45] Or rewrite the words.

Barb Koel [00:09:47] Yeah. But definitely by 2008, we were encouraged to try to come up with as much originality like sketch comedy as possible. And so it was really creatively fulfilling. Whereas other theaters I was working on at the time, they just handed you... You're going to do this song, you're going to do this skit. And a lot of times that was nice. But sometimes you get handed like a real losing number and you're like, Why do I have to do this? But in the Follies, when you're involved, you know, you just you put it up and a lot of times the things were successful. But. With some of my most memorable moments were

the sketches that weren't successful. So you performed at 1 or 2 Nights. Realized that the audience was not reacting. It was a real bad skit, you know, in a session where you're jamming it out and you're writing it. You might think something's hilarious, but the audience doesn't get it.

Jill McCauley [00:10:43] We had a couple of those and we laughed so hard, you think it was so funny?

Barb Koel [00:10:49] Yeah. And it's like, why don't why don't people like this? I thought this was funny.

Jill McCauley [00:10:52] We'd be like like, can we take it out, please?

Barb Koel [00:10:54] Yes, please. We begged Mike. Please. I will. I will come in on my own time and create a new sketch. Please, just. Can we cut the number? And he'd be like, Let's do it one more night. We'd be like ohhhh. Let's just see how our Friday night audience takes it.

Jill McCauley [00:11:11] I had a few of those numbers with Mike, too.

Barb Koel [00:11:13] Yeah. I did. With Mike. Definitely. Yeah.

Daniel Schindler [00:11:18] Because you worked on both ends of the street. How was the process at the Opera House different from the process at the brewery? Because they did sort of a traditional melodrama as the first act and then oleos. And what I remember is they didn't tend to do anything past 1920.

Barb Koel [00:11:34] That's right. Yeah, that was back then. That's what it was, is that we had to pick classic material. Now, there wasn't an Internet back then either. So they basically had old books that they'd gotten from antique stores. And so you'd get together with the musical director and he just kind of played through it. And it's like, Do you like this song? He'd play through five songs and be like, What does this one sound like? The lyrics are kind of fun. And so definitely it was more old timey, more family oriented material down there. So I guess that would be the biggest difference. But I feel like nowadays when I go see the show, they've they've, they don't do that limit anymore. They do music from modern times now. Yeah. So they're becoming a little bit more modern. I'm not sure how they're doing that but it's just their choice. Yeah. Yeah.

Jill McCauley [00:12:29] So that's been for a while now I think.

Barb Koel [00:12:32] Yeah. Yeah.

Daniel Schindler [00:12:34] What are you both remember about living here? Like, existing in Virginia City in the summer? Because at that point, WiFi didn't really exist everywhere.

Jill McCauley [00:12:44] Right.

Daniel Schindler [00:12:45] Talked a little bit earlier about the phone system. What was it like to be here?

Jill McCauley [00:12:50] Scuse me. My gosh. It was. I loved it my first summer, I didn't want to go from college back home. Yes. And so. My gosh. In 1988, the 80s were, I mean,

and prior, this town was just wild. So we're all 18, 19, 20, 21 year olds. Well, very few, 21 year olds. So 18 to 20 in daylight Village. I mean, we were yeah, we'd go out to Three Mile or up Central City and have a party.

Barb Koel [00:13:21] And it was like summer camp for college students. But like....

Jill McCauley [00:13:25] "Summer camp with beer" was what Mike always called it. And there was lots of young people and employees because that's that was the great thing about Bovey. They brought in all these young people. It was so fun and alive and.

Barb Koel [00:13:40] And it was so connected because it was all under one umbrella of Bovey Restorations.

Daniel Schindler [00:13:44] Right? They owned all of the businesses.

Jill McCauley [00:13:46] So they hired everybody and, and the employees all lived here

Barb Koel [00:13:50] Yeah. And it was less clicks like they're over here and over here. Everybody was just one collaborative group of people.

Jill McCauley [00:13:57] And it was super fun. And I loved this old town anyway and remembered it from when I was a kid. I was a kid to remember the candy store and the big suckers.

Barb Koel [00:14:04] Yes, Yes.

Jill McCauley [00:14:06] But yeah, it's magic. It's just magic. It's. We're talking about that earlier. It's just has this... You either love it or you don't and you never come back. But once you're here, if you love it, it's just like in your soul.

Barb Koel [00:14:19] You always want to come back. You always want to visit. And it's always amazing to me how it doesn't change. It changes a little bit. You know, some things might be restored. And, you know, I always feel like a little bit sad. Like oh, they restored the gas station. Yeah, it was kind of cool to see the pumps breaking down, but it was like the original pumps. And remember, we had a photo shoot for the Follies, with the old antique gas pumps and stuff. But, it is nice that they utilize the spaces or try to restore the integrity of the buildings that are falling down.

Jill McCauley [00:14:54] Right. The need to do that. Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's just a magical place and haunting and haunted and, you know, all that. All the stuff. Yeah. Yeah.

Barb Koel [00:15:04] I just remember it was hard for your family to contact you, which was probably alarming for them when I'm 19 years old. Their 19 year old daughter. Yes. Like in this strange ghost town, you know, So they would have to call the Fairweather Inn, leave a message, and then we'd go and collect messages at the Fairweather Inn. And then there were only two payphones in town. One was at the Fairweather Inn one was at the Pioneer Bar. And that's how you would call your family. And I remember calling my Mom collect sometimes. You'd call the thing and like, "Will you accept this call from Barb".

Jill McCauley [00:15:45] From Barb, No! Yeah. Yeah.

Barb Koel [00:15:46] So it was definitely there was no internet, which is probably a good thing with, you know, all the parties we were doing.

Jill McCauley [00:15:54] We were, yeah. We weren't in our rooms on phones.

Barb Koel [00:15:57] No we were out just having a great time.

Jill McCauley [00:15:59] Yeah

Barb Koel [00:16:00] Yeah, yeah.

Jill McCauley [00:16:02] Yeah that was fun. Yeah, the phones.

Barb Koel [00:16:04] Yeah. Those.

Jill McCauley [00:16:05] You look forward to getting your messages at the Fairweather. Yeah, and the mail.

Barb Koel [00:16:09] Yeah, right!

Jill McCauley [00:16:11] Mail was a big deal letter because my parents would write and I write to them. Even though they're only, like an hour and a half away

Barb Koel [00:16:17] I don't know if kid would write through the mail anymore if they were somewhere.

Jill McCauley [00:16:22] I remember my Dad coming to get me. I got a couple of days off and he came on his big highway bike. And got the helmet on, got on the back of the bike had little like, you know, whatever ridge on it and I fell asleep on the back of that bike.

Barb Koel [00:16:37] Oh Wow!

Jill McCauley [00:16:38] My dad goes, that helmet just went into his back. I don't know how I stayed on the bike. But because of so exhausted because you just work, party, work.

Barb Koel [00:16:47] True. That is true. I heard getting really exhausted some days. Yeah. Yeah.

Jill McCauley [00:16:53] It's kind of funny.

Daniel Schindler [00:16:55] VC is known for characters. If you ask anybody and it seems to attract a very interesting demographic of people, from really educated artists to drunkards to all sorts of different people. Who do? Who do you remember?

Barb Koel [00:17:11] From way back.

Daniel Schindler [00:17:13] Well, from from being here. Like, who do you who do you remember?

Jill McCauley [00:17:15] My first big memory of the characters, Wally.

Barb Koel [00:17:19] I remember Wally to.

Jill McCauley [00:17:21] My first day in town.

Barb Koel [00:17:21] He was always in the Pioneer, wasn't he?

Jill McCauley [00:17:24] In the Pioneer?

Barb Koel [00:17:24] Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jill McCauley [00:17:25] My first day in town, I was walking down, just kind of checking out towns, heading toward the Bale and he was up in his balcony above Bob's Place and. And yeah, he's like, I can't remember what he said...

Barb Koel [00:17:35] Always makes he.

Jill McCauley [00:17:36] Hollered some vulgar things at me and I was like, you know what is what wife beater T-shirt.

Barb Koel [00:17:40] And he always wore the same shirt.

Jill McCauley [00:17:42] I just looked up at him like...

Barb Koel [00:17:44] I don't know if it was the same shirt, but the same look.

Jill McCauley [00:17:45] Look. Yeah. He hollered at me and I thought, He can't be talking to me. I just was like, I'm just going to keep walking . Yeah, he's the first one I really remember.

Barb Koel [00:17:56] I'll blame the alcohol for him. I mean, yeah, he was always drinking so that maybe some of the vulgarities cam from that.

Jill McCauley [00:18:03] That I found a little shocking.

Barb Koel [00:18:05] But his friend, like Jody. Jody was a local here, and it seemed like they were together a lot. I mean, and I remember them sitting next to each other .

Jill McCauley [00:18:15] They probably played... What is it? Ship captain, crew or whatever.

Barb Koel [00:18:17] Oh, yeah! Really fun dice game.

Jill McCauley [00:18:20] Yeah. Jody Yes. Jody became a very close friend of mine who, so he's obviously another character that he had some sort of degenerative, I do remember him?

Daniel Schindler [00:18:31] I do.

Barb Koel [00:18:32] It was a disease.

Jill McCauley [00:18:33] So he looked a lot older than he was. And remember him telling me the stories because he was so proud that he, you know, stuck it to the doctors because all they told me was going to die by the time I was 13. And then by the time I was 17. And

then, okay, we could probably die by age 28. Well, he lived to be like, I think he was 60. Yeah. When he died. And he was a little smart ass and he was stubborn. So he was a definitely a character. Yeah.

Barb Koel [00:18:59] And I remember some of the bartenders were great characters, like the Colonel and his whole family lived here. He was had a wife, Norene and Jimbo and JT. Yeah. And I think there was a daughter, but we just never saw her.

Jill McCauley [00:19:14] Yeah. Camille. Yeah.

Barb Koel [00:19:17] And then VI we were talking about this last night while I was like, Hey, sugar. And you just sweetest lady that you could ever imagine.

Jill McCauley [00:19:28] She'd cart people home.

Barb Koel [00:19:30] Yeah.

Jill McCauley [00:19:32] Who couldn't make it by walking. Yeah, right. She was the fire watch, so she'd drive around all night and make sure that there were no fires. And, you know, I don't know why they did away with it or why they thought it was necessary in the first place, but. Well.

Barb Koel [00:19:46] I mean, that story Mike told, was it last night that they turned on the boiler in the Follies? Maybe it was important.

Jill McCauley [00:19:53] Yeah. Yes.

Barb Koel [00:19:54] If people were like, lighting fire in old buildings and just one little spark and kind of flatten this town.

Jill McCauley [00:20:00] Yeah. Pretty bad idea.

Barb Koel [00:20:02] Yeah, well, I remember. And it's still this way, I'm sure. The 4th of July, they light fireworks off on Boot Hill. And if the hill starts catching on fire, they just shut it down because it can just. Yeah, everything can go up like a matchstick.

Daniel Schindler [00:20:16] I remember when the round house burned.

Jill McCauley [00:20:19] That was arson, one of the kids that did that.

Barb Koel [00:20:22] Really.?

Jill McCauley [00:20:22] Yeah, it had one of the trains in it. I don't know what, what they were doing. I think they just set on fire to set on fire.

Barb Koel [00:20:32] Wow, that's terrible. Yeah I was, we were, speaking of the train, we were talking about different things like with marketing, with the Follies. We decided we were going to hold up the train.

Jill McCauley [00:20:43] yeah, that was fun.

Barb Koel [00:20:43] And so we would hide in the weeds somewhere in between Virginia City and Nevada City. I don't even know how we got where we got and then pop out and sing The Lion Sleeps Tonight. Yeah. And invite people to the show.

Jill McCauley [00:20:56] Yeah. Yeah. It was fun.

Barb Koel [00:20:57] Things like that.

Jill McCauley [00:20:58] Our version of robbing the train.

Barb Koel [00:20:59] Yeah, that's right. "The Alder Gulch Short Line", I remember just hearing that speaker always whoever was on speaker. I always said it the same way.

Jill McCauley [00:21:09] Yeah, it's funny. Yeah.

Daniel Schindler [00:21:12] What do you think draws people back? You said it was magic. I agree.

Barb Koel [00:21:16] It's I think what Bob called it a vortex. And it's not just with the actors. It's with everyone who has spent time here. Yeah, they feel drawn back or repelled. Like you said, there are some people that will get here and within a couple of weeks they're just out of here. They can't stand the isolation or they don't fit in for some reason.

Jill McCauley [00:21:37] Just get a bad vibe or they're run out. Like you need to leave because you're weird.

Barb Koel [00:21:38] Out, right? Yeah, because it all attracts some very strange people. I would say the locals and even the summer do not tolerate somebody who comes in and tries to bully others. I remember people, maybe it was tourists or something from out of town coming into the Pioneer and targeting one of our actors. And I was at the table with this person and I just kind of slipped back and I went and talked to Mike and Jill. Pretty soon the whole bar was behind this person who was bullying one of our actor friends. And Jill came and was trying to talk him down to just leave peacefully. But, he was escalating the conversation and she and Jill, I think you said, you know, you better turn around.

Jill McCauley [00:22:33] I did, that's right

Barb Koel [00:22:34] Look at what's the result of the way you're behaving? And he turned around like the entire bar, which was full of townspeople and summer theater or summer employees, were just like... "try something", you know. And he just walked out and we just locked the door.

Jill McCauley [00:22:56] Yeah. You should turn around right now.

Barb Koel [00:22:56] Yeah. I think, you know, once you're out, really, you know, coming down from where you're at, why don't you just turn around and see what the result of this might be? Now, I'm not saying it would have been a big brawl, but, I mean.

Jill McCauley [00:23:10] He would have been put out the door. Yeah.

Daniel Schindler [00:23:12] Yeah, I've seen people put out the door before.

Barb Koel [00:23:14] Yeah. Yeah, I think I have too, actually.

Jill McCauley [00:23:17] Yeah. Yeah.

Daniel Schindler [00:23:19] It's an interesting stratification of people. Yeah, because you've got. You've got locals. They're here all the time. Right, total year-round round local people. And then you've got this this strata of summer workers that come into working and living. And you've got this crowd of tourists.

Jill McCauley [00:23:37] Right. Yeah.

Daniel Schindler [00:23:38] Just are coming through tourists or one day visits or things like that that come through. And it's just so interesting to me because you sort of become an honorary local at some point. If you're if you're here for enough years and, you know, enough people and that's always sort of interesting that; Do you find that when you are interacting with people?

Jill McCauley [00:23:59] Yeah. They always, the locals, always before It's like me after several years, oh, you're a summer local. You're local.

Barb Koel [00:24:06] Yeah. Definitely. I ended up spending a good portion of a winter here once.

Daniel Schindler [00:24:13] Really? How was that?

Barb Koel [00:24:14] Yeah. So I loved it. I would say so, the first part through Christmas and January was good, but then the winter gets very long and all you see are the same people. And you know, about the third week of 20 below zero and you can't even get to Bozeman or get to Ennis because the hill is too scary to drive over. It did feel isolating and so I probably left, it might be mid-March or something like that, but I just happened to be here because I was moving to Mexico, but we were waiting for some paperwork for a pet bird that we had to come through. You had to get... The bird, had to have a passport because of bird diseases...

Barb Koel [00:25:00] And stuff like that. Mexico was afraid might bring, even though the bird had been in our possession for its entire life, you know? Anyway. Yeah, it just took a really long time for that to come through. So we, we just thought, okay, we'll stay in Virginia City, too. And we thought it'd be, you know, a month, but it just turned out to be like five months.

Jill McCauley [00:25:21] Yeah, I can't imagine being here in the winter.

Barb Koel [00:25:24] But it was fun, too. I ended up, you know, just to find stuff to do, like helped host an epic Halloween party. I mean, I think me and maybe a couple other people organized the whole thing, decorated the place, organize costume contest. I mean, I have pictures of it, it was really fun. So just stuff like that, I would just be like, we got to do a special event or something.

Jill McCauley [00:25:51] And the local folks love that stuff.

Barb Koel [00:25:54] We'd talk to Rosie and be like, Hey, would you mind? Or The Le'fever girls? And they'd be like, we'll come down for Halloween. That sounds fun. So they were luckily really supportive of that.

Jill McCauley [00:26:05] Oh, yeah.

Daniel Schindler [00:26:07] So this year is the 76th summer of the Virginia City players from their start and, no one has disputed this and I found this in a couple of places, it is the longest running summer theater West of the Mississippi.

Jill McCauley [00:26:25] Right.

Daniel Schindler [00:26:26] What I'm told. That doesn't happen without community support, right? What do you think the Players mean to this town?

Jill McCauley [00:26:37] I guess you could say I speak more to that having been a part of it.

Barb Koel [00:26:41] Right. I think they always say once you're a player, you're always a player. You're like a part of this family. I think the the town's very proud of that theater being such a historical building. And it gives them, I think it brings Virginia City identity not as just a ghost town, but as an active town, that and a few of the fixtures that never go away, like the candy store, you were saying. So I think it has a lot of meaning. I can't imagine, honestly, this town without the Opera House and the Follies now that it has become a fixture. I just I don't know what people would do. I think they'd come for an hour of their little weekend vacation and then they'd leave. They'd go to Ennis, . they'd go to Yellowstone Park. It keeps people here.

Jill McCauley [00:27:34] It's not just the locals who love it so much. I mean, like, Butte people. You know, and they grew up coming here and going to the show, and now they're bringing their kids. So, I think it has a, and Bozeman has a large local appeal to local Montana, you know towns close by. They support the Brewery Follies huge too. I mean..

Barb Koel [00:27:58] Yes.

Jill McCauley [00:27:59] Once it kind of got established after a few years, it was, yeah.

Barb Koel [00:28:03] It's really important to keep it going, to keep the torch going if someone gets tired. I mean, I know the Opera House has gone through several directors over the years, but they've done a good job at someone stepping up and saying, "okay, I'll run it for a while." Yeah, it's been nice. Bill was gone for a long time, but now he and his wife Christina, have had it for a while.

Daniel Schindler [00:28:30] If someone was going to come down here. You've never been here before, what would you tell them?

Barb Koel [00:28:35] I'd tell them all the places they need to go. Go to the theater, definitely go to both theaters. Unless, you know, with the Follies, sometimes the humor might not be everyone's cup of tea because it is a little more edgy. So we always warn people of that. But really, if they watch TV.

Jill McCauley [00:28:53] Yes, sit coms and stuff.

Barb Koel [00:28:54] They should be able to it should be able to handle it.

Jill McCauley [00:28:56] But some people might not want their kids to go, We don't encourage kids coming to the show, but they can.

Barb Koel [00:29:02] If they have tiny kids, they might not want to bring them just because they'd have some explaining to do, right?

Jill McCauley [00:29:07] Or maybe the kids would be explaining it to them.

Barb Koel [00:29:09] Don't you know what they're saying? And then the candy store go through the shops, go through Nevada City.

Jill McCauley [00:29:17] I always tell people about Nevada City.

Barb Koel [00:29:19] It's such a neat, Nevada city is so neat if you've never seen it before. It's fun to go with a new person and see it through fresh eyes, right? All the different buildings and like the little jail that's there and the outhouse, that's two stories.

Jill McCauley [00:29:33] Double decker... I get top!

Barb Koel [00:29:35] I'm not going to be in that bottom house. No thank you.

Jill McCauley [00:29:42] I think a lot of people think it's a ghost town. So that's what I always tell them, it's never been a ghost town.

Barb Koel [00:29:48] So Jill started the Ghost Walk originally.

Jill McCauley [00:29:51] Yeah, just walk around town, there's so many ghost stories here, and. But it's not a ghost town because people have lived here continuously since 1863.

Barb Koel [00:30:01] Right, Right.

Jill McCauley [00:30:04] But yeah, the Ghost Walk, it's still being, I sold it. It's still going around today. She uses my original script. It really was kind of a trick. I call it the Ghost Walk, but it was really a lot of history that I snuck in and people loved it.

Barb Koel [00:30:17] Made it so interesting, though, that all the ghost stories were based on fact.

Jill McCauley [00:30:21] It's history, this is what happened here and this is what the haunt is. And, yeah, so then I got rid of things that weren't like, seemed really far out there. But yeah, it was good.

Barb Koel [00:30:33] So when we were going to come here for this interview, I was looking at hotels and the ones that came up because this is a busy weekend, was at the Bonanza Hotel, which is one of the most haunted buildings in Virginia City, and the same two rooms kept popping up. I don't remember which one, six, seven, I don't know. So I texted Jill. I'm like, You ran that ghost walk which of those rooms are the most haunted?.

Jill McCauley [00:30:57] It was five and seven.

Barb Koel [00:31:00] I was like, those are the ones that are available. So I didn't book it. And then luckily there was an extra room at Daylight, which I so appreciate. I was like, I just didn't book it because I thought if I hear one noise, I'm going to think it's the ghost tucking me in. Or although I.

Jill McCauley [00:31:16] Lived there my first summer.

Barb Koel [00:31:18] And did you have things going on or not?

Jill McCauley [00:31:21] My first summer in the Follies, I should say. Yeah. I had one time where my I put my garbage out by my door and was going to take care of home after rehearsal and I came back and they were on my bed. And then photos on my on the side table were turned upside down. I was like. I was the only one in daylight then. So somebody could have been messing with me. But, I ended up moving down to Daylight.

Barb Koel [00:31:43] Yeah. I don't think I could hang there any longer.

Jill McCauley [00:31:46] But the tour, I used to be able to walk the tour through the Bonanza Inn.

Barb Koel [00:31:52] At night with flashlights.

Jill McCauley [00:31:56] Yeah, And I there's lots of people who had experiences on there, including my sister who had her. I remember watching her, she came through the back door by the Bonanza House and she went like this. and said "Somebody pulled my hair." Well, she was the first one. I had other people who were like something in my hair.

Barb Koel [00:32:15] Oh, my gosh!

Jill McCauley [00:32:15] I had these two little Native American boys on the tour one time. And then we were kind of going through and they stayed in this room and I suddenly just heard them, ARRGGH! They come running out and I was like, What's what's wrong? What's wrong? They had opened the closet in there and said, "We saw and we saw a guy in there, a miner.", and it just freaked them out. And I was like, okay, let's go.

Barb Koel [00:32:35] Tell that about when you were you were walking back in a stroller and you were going to take a picture. You took a picture of you and Mac just I'm going to take a picture of us in the window of one of the old buildings.

Jill McCauley [00:32:48] That just popped up in my memories on Facebook like yesterday. So it's funny you brought that up. Yeah. Behind me, it looks like a person in a wagon.

Barb Koel [00:32:56] Like an old fashioned carriage wagon.

Jill McCauley [00:32:58] Yeah. And I it's in the reflection, so I thought that this would be a picture of me and Mac with the reflection is it's behind me.

Barb Koel [00:33:05] And it wasn't the carriage that's in town.

Jill McCauley [00:33:10] No.

Barb Koel [00:33:10] If you look in the picture and the guy, he's looking at you.

Jill McCauley [00:33:13] Yeah.

Barb Koel [00:33:14] He's looking at them.

Jill McCauley [00:33:16] It's giving me the chill. Yeah. Nice. I put it on Facebook and I said, What do you see when you and I had tons of comments, people seeing different things in that photo.

Barb Koel [00:33:25] There was there was one time I was staying in a house, I think it was Sheriff Romey's. It's. Allison's Allison Adam's house now. And Allison was trying to sell the house the summer that I was staying there and renting it out. And she said, Well, could you take some pictures of the interior? Because you have it cleaned up really nice and. And it would help me put it on the real estate market. I was like, okay. So I kept taking pictures. And, you know, every time it looks like these little orbs were in the picture. I know. You know,.

Jill McCauley [00:34:01] I've had those pictures with orbs in them.

Barb Koel [00:34:03] And I was. I kept trying to get pictures of the living room. And I thought, this is kind of freaky. That. These, I can't get a clear shot. And so I don't know what came over me, but I just said, I don't mind if you are here, but could you let me just get one clear picture of this living room because we just want to show it on, you know, the real estate. So just one clear picture, but I don't mind if you're here just talking to what I thought was there. Snapped the picture. Clear.

Jill McCauley [00:34:36] That's funny. Yeah. Mike And I always see when we go, because we stayed here in the Bonanza house where the nuns lived.

Barb Koel [00:34:42] Yes.

Jill McCauley [00:34:43] Back in the 1860s and took care of the sick in the Bonanza Inn. So that explains why there would be haunts in the Bonanza Inn, miners who were injured or whatever. But that house was supposedly haunted by a nun. And we just go in every year and say we're happy you're here. We're here. And it's so. It's a very good haunt. At the Bonanza house, So. Yeah, lots of haunts, I love it. But I have never used me actually seen a ghost, and I don't think I really want to.

Barb Koel [00:35:11] Right. And maybe they, I always feel like. Do ghosts know that? So they don't really make their appearance known.

Jill McCauley [00:35:17] I had a girl that came on that ghost walk. She was a ghost psychic out of Seattle and taking pictures and videos and stuff and she said, when we went used to go in the Hayman's building too. She said, You will always be safe because they appreciate, the five guys on Boot Hill, that you're telling their story in what they consider an accurate way. Which was... Were they really bad guys? All of them. Or were they caught up in like a political thing at the time.

Barb Koel [00:35:50] The frenzy of all these hangings, the Vigilantes.

Jill McCauley [00:35:56] Were they Confederate sympathizers who said the wrong thing and most of the vigilantes were northern sympathizers, all this stuff. And so she said you'll, because you're telling their side of the story, they will never bother you. Whew, thank God!, But they did have their people they had experiences in that hangman's building. People get sick, have to leave.

Barb Koel [00:36:20] They just feel stange

Jill McCauley [00:36:21] Heavy.

Daniel Schindler [00:36:22] I think that energy is something about this place? There's so much history that's happened here.

Barb Koel [00:36:26] Yeah. A lot of dark. A lot of dark history, for sure. And exciting history. There's Yeah. I remember at the end of one of the seasons as things shut down and people had to go back to either school, some of the places would need extra help. So I was at the front desk at the Fairweather Inn at like maybe late August or something. Yeah, during the day I would do that. And probably the last week that it was open for the season, they had me opening it. There was like 1 or 2 days where there weren't any hotel guests from the night before. So the thing was completely locked and I don't know why they did it this way. Maybe they still do, but when you were opening the building in the morning, it and we're talking at like five in the morning, you didn't go through the front door. They had you go down through the side door and you had to go into the hotel through this hallway, and then you get to the front desk that way. And it always.. I mean, it freaked me out, like, talk about thick air, I'd open that door and be going down that hallway and it just felt like I was interrupting something.

Jill McCauley [00:37:40] Yeah.

Jill McCauley [00:37:40] It was just very strange and I was glad and I only had to do it a couple of times at the end of the season because it was scary.

Jill McCauley [00:37:49] What room in there supposed to be? Is it 10?

Jill McCauley [00:37:51] Yeah, it's that very first one, right?

Jill McCauley [00:37:53] It's no, it's so it's back where you're talking about coming in.

Barb Koel [00:37:56] Oh, It was?

Jill McCauley [00:38:01] I think it's by there, I think it's room 10. So that might have been what you were feeling.

Barb Koel [00:38:01] I was feeling something. Like, like something was going on and it was always like people were like, "What are you doing?"

Daniel Schindler [00:38:15] So. This has been great. And we're sort of getting to the end of this. Any other memories you want to share for posterity or to sort of tell people about that we haven't talked about things you remember people you remember that... Audience things that happen during shows.

Jill McCauley [00:38:36] Do you remember the bachelorette party? Were you?

Barb Koel [00:38:38] I don't know.

Jill McCauley [00:38:39] The Butte bachelorette party.

Barb Koel [00:38:41] Was it, though, you were talking about last night?

Jill McCauley [00:38:44] Yeah. I mean, there were a bunch we had a lot. We've had a lot of bachelorette parties and stuff over the years, and we always.

Barb Koel [00:38:49] Get very raucous. It just means we have the element of selling alcohol to them.

Jill McCauley [00:38:53] Right? But this group came already... And then they were just giving up and leaving. And then when they finally the Moms, I guess, because they were pretty young, made them leave, get out, get on the bus. Mike was like he said something vulgar, but they're gone and everybody was like...

Barb Koel [00:39:11] Disrupting the show.

Jill McCauley [00:39:13] You know, it's horrible. Yeah.

Barb Koel [00:39:14] Sometimes it was horrible when we would have just a really over-the-top like maybe people who got drunk or people who were loud and obnoxious because they were drunk and then enjoying the show. And it was hard to just keep performing. And you had to, you know, as a professional, you would just keep going with your number. But every once in a while you just couldn't take it and you just stop. And, Mike is really good at making them now a part of the show.

Jill McCauley [00:39:40] Yeah. He was always the master. Yeah, making them look like idiots.

Barb Koel [00:39:43] Mike will take care of this. I'll just get through my number and when he comes out, he'll. He'll make that person a part of the show.

Jill McCauley [00:39:48] Yeah. Yeah. He was good at that. Still is good at that.

Barb Koel [00:39:51] And sometimes just to tease the audience, like I think Mike did this the most, if somebody got up and they were seated in the front row, got up to go to the bathroom because there's really no other route to the other than to stand up and the whole audience can see you and you go to the bathroom. And I think Mike would follow him in there.

Jill McCauley [00:40:08] Yeah.

Barb Koel [00:40:10] So Mike is just a big part of the Follies, and his antics are just bar none, amazing.

Jill McCauley [00:40:17] He's the biggest draw for sure.

Barb Koel [00:40:18] Definitely.

Barb Koel [00:40:21] I can't imagine that theater without him.

Jill McCauley [00:40:22] Yeah, so he's been there since 88, right? And I think it started in 84.

Daniel Schindler [00:40:28] It started as overflow for Opera House. Yeah, just an oleo show as an overflow house when they were full or an off night

Jill McCauley [00:40:36] Yeah. And then he just never left. And then they made him the director. And then when the state put it out to bid, we got it.

Barb Koel [00:40:44] Which is great.

Jill McCauley [00:40:45] But he's the he's the master at whipping the audience into shape, getting them going.

Barb Koel [00:40:50] I remember when I would have duets with him, I always loved it because it would probably always be a success because if it was failing, he'd just come up with stuff. He'd just make up his own script. But it also made me nervous because I thought. I just want to be able to keep up with him with the improv.

Jill McCauley [00:41:10] He made you laugh too. He'd try to get Barb to crack up on stage.

Barb Koel [00:41:13] I would totally laugh,.

Jill McCauley [00:41:16] Which was great because audience loves that when you crack up and start laughing.

Barb Koel [00:41:20] But the neat thing about Mike too is he is so such a great mimic and such a good imitator of people that some of the old townsfolk that we talk about, he could memorialize it for you because he can embody the way they looked and the way they talked. Like instantly. It's so amazing

Jill McCauley [00:41:40] Yeah, his impressions. Though you got a really mean Sarah Palin it was like, amazing. Did you ever see that one? You put on that brown wig and it was like wholly, and the glasses! Yeah. So you, you, you also have that skill.

Barb Koel [00:41:57] It was fun. Yeah, it was. It was always fun being in the show and trying to create these characters caricature versions of political figures or stars or.

Jill McCauley [00:42:08] That's why I loved it when I first came here in 88. We that's the thing we did. Like almost every night we go to the Follies and they had tables then.

Barb Koel [00:42:16] Definitely.

Jill McCauley [00:42:21] They were wooden, long....

Daniel Schindler [00:42:23] Yeah, wooden trestle almost tables.

Jill McCauley [00:42:24] Yeah exactly. And we would sit in the back and sit on the tables so we were right above a little bit. And the cast, let's see... Was Mike, Denny Staggs, Paula Lacote.

Barb Koel [00:42:38] Was it Binky?

Barb Koel [00:42:40] It wasn't Binky.

Jill McCauley [00:42:41] Was it Jill Countryman that year?

Jill McCauley [00:42:42] Anyway they fed all these underage kids Bud Light bottles. Yeah, that's another reason we go, let's go. We can drink there and they love the locals, we were the kids, you know and although they weren't much older than us now for five years but then we just loved going to the the Follies.

Barb Koel [00:43:06] It was the same. That's why those two years I was at the Opera House, if I had a chance or a day off and I was in town, I was at the Follies show. Just because I just thought it was great and not only funny, but the people were so talented, gifted singers. It was amazing to see live performances.

Jill McCauley [00:43:26] And the double meeting stuff.

Barb Koel [00:43:28] Yeah, It was very clever.

Jill McCauley [00:43:32] And Paula Lacote has passed away. God. It's well, a long time like. 25 years, maybe go. But she was so great in the Follies. So great person to. But yeah, I did mention her. She was kind of my hero at the time. Like a God, I'd love to sing like her and be silly and goofy and funny like her.

Barb Koel [00:43:59] And it's weird. People who've passed on like Glen.

Barb Koel [00:44:03] Glenn Simon can't forget Glen. He was in the show for a long time.

Daniel Schindler [00:44:07] Yeah, yeah, like 5 or 6 summers.

Jill McCauley [00:44:10] Maybe more than that.

Barb Koel [00:44:11] And he was one of those crossovers from the Opera House.

Daniel Schindler [00:44:13] He was, wasn't he.

Jill McCauley [00:44:14] Yeah, He had a multitude of, like, health stuff, one of which the main was was MS. And he would, during the winter, it seems like, he would kind of get sick and he would be wheelchair bound sometimes. But I think, knowing that he could come back here, He would get better, like his mind would make his body and he'd come here and be like, Really? You were sick this winter? Yeah, I was in a wheelchair, but he'd be just fine. And yeah, he loved it. What was that character? Carlos the Man of Love.

Barb Koel [00:44:47] Carlos! And the audience is just. I hope Carlos is going to perform.

Jill McCauley [00:44:51] He'd go around and tease the women, get his shirt unbuttoned over the scarf.

Barb Koel [00:44:56] I am Carlos, the Man of love.

Jill McCauley [00:44:59] Yeah. We miss Glenn. Yeah, he was a really great guy.

Barb Koel [00:45:05] He was.

Jill McCauley [00:45:07] So lots of fun memories with him.

Barb Koel [00:45:10] I was thinking about this. So back in 2021, when Bill Koch called me, and I almost did the Opera House that summer, and I was thinking... Has anyone, once they've gone to the Follies, have they ever gone back? I don't know. I didn't end up doing it because my Mom was having some health challenges and I. I didn't want to put that on them. I didn't want to join the show. And then midsummer just be like, Sorry, my Mom is in the hospital. I got to leave tomorrow. Yeah. So it just didn't pan out. But, it got close like they had already started creating the program and my picture was there and stuff. And so I just felt really bad having to back out of it. But I'm sure they understand. I don't know if anyone has done that.

Daniel Schindler [00:45:58] Gone the other way.

Barb Koel [00:45:58] Yeah. I don't know.

Jill McCauley [00:46:01] Once you go to the Follies, that's it..

Barb Koel [00:46:05] I mean, I'm thinking back I don't know how that would have felt, really.

Jill McCauley [00:46:07] I think because it's like you were talking about earlier. You're creating your own material.

Barb Koel [00:46:12] Yes.

Jill McCauley [00:46:13] Your own sketches you or writing things, making up songs or you're. Yes. It's so. It's so fulfilling. When when you get such a great reaction to something you've created.

Barb Koel [00:46:25] Exactly.

Jill McCauley [00:46:27] Did you ever do Butte hair?

Barb Koel [00:46:29] We did. We didn't do the song you did, but we did. You know, all the Beyonce's. All The Single Ladies. We switched it to, I think, all the Butte ladies or something. We did a similar thing where we were talking about their hair.

Jill McCauley [00:46:43] Yeah. Okay. We'd rat our hair.

Barb Koel [00:46:45] We had her hair up or whatever.

Jill McCauley [00:46:47] Here and then sing and turn it into Butte (singing) hair and Butte people. My gosh. Any reference, they loved absolutely loved it. We were making fun, but they knew it was in good fun. So we've always had that Butte connection at the Follies. Big time, I think the Opera House as well.

Barb Koel [00:47:08] Definitely.

Jill McCauley [00:47:10] The buses. The Tucker busses. Those are kind of frightening to see coming. And you're like, God. You know, they hit every bar. Yeah, on the way.

Barb Koel [00:47:17] This is more like a crawl, crawl bus.

Barb Koel [00:47:19] Yeah, The pub crawl. Yeah, the Harleys.

Daniel Schindler [00:47:25] You would hear them from the other side of town.

Barb Koel [00:47:26] Yes!

Jill McCauley [00:47:27] It was amazing to have that wall of sound. They all park and they all park, they'd back in. And then when they leave, they do the same down thing at the Pio. When they leave, they do. It's like a domino thing. One. And then the next. And then they. And it was so cool. That wall of sound and. I remember Mike just packing them in. Yeah. Like, well. You know, we made the reservation for 80, but we actually have 100. Okay, well, they would be standing along the wall and behind the bar.

Barb Koel [00:47:57] I remember that happening a couple of times that it was overbooked, but he just fit everybody in anyways.

Barb Koel [00:48:02] Yeah, they were great. That was a great audience. I don't think they've come in a while. I don't know if maybe the club doesn't do much anymore.

Barb Koel [00:48:11] Well, didn't we get a lot of tour busses? Maybe more back in the Bovey Restoration days?

Jill McCauley [00:48:16] Oh, yeah.

Barb Koel [00:48:17] The early Follies, I felt like. Yeah. Like tour busses would come.

Jill McCauley [00:48:22] There were tons of tour busses. Bovey had just one person. That was their job.

Barb Koel [00:48:26] Okay.

Daniel Schindler [00:48:28] And they would put their hotel reservation and their entertainment and their food reservation, because it was all one.

Barb Koel [00:48:34] Yeah. It was the packages.

Jill McCauley [00:48:36] At the Fairweather Inn, when I worked there. Yeah. That was in all the reservations I remember. They would get messed up all the time.

Barb Koel [00:48:44] Because they were at the Fairweather Inn it wasn't at the theatres.

Daniel Schindler [00:48:46] We had to to pick up this list.

Jill McCauley [00:48:49] Finally, Mike was, like, not, there's bound to be mistakes. Or "We know we made a reservation for here", and they...

Barb Koel [00:48:56] Yeah. oh, that's right. They'd get the theaters mixed up.

Jill McCauley [00:49:01] Right. So. Yeah

Barb Koel [00:49:05] So many memories.

Jill McCauley [00:49:06] I know when you asked that, I'm like, gosh, there's just too many.

Barb Koel [00:49:08] I know.

Daniel Schindler [00:49:09] There's a lot.

Barb Koel [00:49:13] My first summer was the best. I mean, in a lot of ways, just because of the magic of the newness of it and in 94 was kind of the same thing. First time in the show. Yeah. Lots of fond memories, if you can remember me from my first year here.

Barb Koel [00:49:31] And why would your memory be foggy?

Jill McCauley [00:49:34] I remember going to work at this Fargo in the morning and just being like, oh God, there's going to be silverware clanking together there. But everybody, we all were just like, it was just a wild time.

Barb Koel [00:49:49] It was! Well, they give us a free drink at both bars right after the show because they wanted us to mingle with the audiences. And so, I mean, when you're 19, 20 or 21 years old, so you don't have to ask me twice, so know, I'll be right there.

Jill McCauley [00:50:08] Gotta go see Tommy Lee. Yeah. Tom Lee. He's back bartending. He was gone for a long time and now he's here. I saw him chuck a few people out of the bar.

Barb Koel [00:50:21] My goodness.

Jill McCauley [00:50:22] Big guy. Yeah.

Daniel Schindler [00:50:27] Well, thank you guys so much.

Barb Koel [00:50:28] First of all, it's great to see you again, Dan, because I know you're a big part of the history here, too. And so putting this project together is very meaningful.

Jill McCauley [00:50:37] Really under you and Mike and Ken and those first casts.

Barb Koel [00:50:45] Ken would be a great person for you to talk to.

Daniel Schindler [00:50:47] He's coming on Tuesday.

Barb Koel [00:50:48] Good. Good. Because you can't not. And if you could get him to play like some of his classic Rag piano like the ones.

Jill McCauley [00:50:59] That would be awesome.

Barb Koel [00:50:59] Yeah. He usually has those still under his fingers when he comes to town. See if he'll play at least a section of them because he is such an amazing talent.

Jill McCauley [00:51:11] What year did you come here?

Daniel Schindler [00:51:13] I started in 91.

Jill McCauley [00:51:15] OK.. In 91. So yeah, that first those first because it was so new still.

Daniel Schindler [00:51:20] Yeah. Yeah. Because Mike started in 88.

Jill McCauley [00:51:22] Yeah.

Daniel Schindler [00:51:23] So I was a couple of years into that sort of era of it changing into this modern era.

Barb Koel [00:51:28] Kind of establishing what? Yeah. The different roles were and how it was going to be. And what the show was going to be like and.

Barb Koel [00:51:34] And, and just. I loved the way Ken and Mike would play off of each other. Ken was a part of the show. He never just sat there. He would be watching. And it was if he was watching it for the first time, he knew he was part of the show. He's right in the line of sight. And so when Mike was out there for solos, it was very often, you know, he would laugh at Mike like. It was a great it was a great. Yeah. The way they interacted.

Daniel Schindler [00:52:04] Yeah, there was a lot of energy, especially in those early years. I think there was a lot, there's a lot of energy. Everyone was young and everything was new.

Jill McCauley [00:52:13] Yeah. Right. You know.

Barb Koel [00:52:14] That's true.

Jill McCauley [00:52:15] Yeah, a lot of excitement around it from people like this amazing show in Virginia City. And people would come from big cities and they'd go, "Wow, how is this here?" This is like a tiny town.

Barb Koel [00:52:27] This hidden gem

Jill McCauley [00:52:29] Yeah, this hidden gem is amazing that this kind of show is here in the middle of this tiny town, you know? Kind of out of the way of things, and yeah, that kind of made you feel proud, like. Yeah.

Barb Koel [00:52:46] Definitely.

Daniel Schindler [00:52:46] We do that here.

Barb Koel [00:52:49] I remember back then, you know, because there weren't internet to say, "What are the lyrics to this song?" We would, we'd have a tape recorder. Do you have a tape recording of this song? I Will Follow Him from the 1960s or whatever that. Yes, I do. And you'd sit there and you'd like, press it, play, write down the lyrics. Rewind. Write down...(laughter).

Barb Koel [00:53:10] Yeah. There's a picture of us with the boombox in between us.

Barb Koel [00:53:14] Yeah. We have one from our first year in rehearsals and we have the big boombox. Yeah. That was what you brought to rehearsals.

Jill McCauley [00:53:25] Sitting on the boardwalk.

Barb Koel [00:53:25] And it was all handwriting. There wasn't like let's get on a computer and write our script like, get out the notebook and write it out.

Jill McCauley [00:53:32] And Ken would have to write the music.

Barb Koel [00:53:35] Oh my gosh the amount of work he went through.

Jill McCauley [00:53:38] Yeah, That was such a fun time.

Daniel Schindler [00:53:46] You know,, I think we're done.

Barb Koel [00:53:48] I know! We could just. We could talk for hours.

Barb Koel [00:53:52] Thank you.

Jill McCauley [00:53:53] Thanks, Dan

Daniel Schindler [00:53:53] Thank you so much.